

Summary of Congressional Comment Regarding
Southeast Asia

15 June 1964

Senator Wayne Morse commented upon a briefing that morning by the Secretary of State. He reiterated a challenge to debate the subject of South Viet Nam publicly with the Secretary and reported that Viet Cong activities, and the casualties they had inflicted, had doubled during the past week. The Senator also attacked a NEW YORK TIMES article supporting the war. He remarked that South Viet Nam is not independent and that our actions there were as imperialistic as those of the Soviet Union or Great Britain and were a violation of international law and the Geneva Accords.

Senator E. L. Bartlett likewise commented on the entire subject of Indochina. He attacked the idea that Southeast Asia would fall like a house of cards over a single crisis in the area. He stated that our purpose in Indochina is not to obtain total victory but simply to give the nations there a chance for national independence. He engaged in an extensive historical analysis of the situation pointing out the lack of our knowledge concerning Chinese intentions, and urging that Viet Nam is but a part of the larger Indochinese problem. Senator Bartlett's thesis was that we still have several political options open to us in this vital area and that the choice is not between simple withdrawal and total war.

16 June 1964

Senator Morse charged that the United States Government "deliberately and intentionally to conceal from the American people the facts concerning this government's illegal course of action in Southeast Asia" had carried out a Laotian bombing mission without notifying the Royal Laotian Government. He asserted that this warfare was illegal under international law and the United States Constitution.

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He also accused Australia of encouraging United States aircraft attacks while withholding any participation in their own right. He made a similar charge with respect to members of SEATO. Morse also attacked the State Department for refusing to act through the United Nations with respect to this problem.

17 June 1964

Representative Charles E. Chamberlain expressed deep concern over the deteriorating situation in South Viet Nam and the fact that Department of Defense information on the subject was being classified Confidential. He charged that DOD memorandums on the subject were "so devoid of substance that it had to be classified in order to obscure the true facts from the American people." He introduced an article from the 18 May issue of U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORTk which quoted extensively the remarks of Mr. Robert L. Moore of Boston, Mass. Mr. Moore asserted that Secretary McNamara and other officials were being shielded from the true facts in South Viet Nam. Representative Chamberlain also introduced a DOD memorandum criticizing the Moore article. Morse pointed out, however, that Secretary Ailes did not doubt the integrity of Mr. Moore. Chamberlain believes that it is time the Administration became more forthright with the American people and released information concerning the state of hostilities in South Viet Nam.

Senator Morse again requested the Department of State to take the Southeast Asia situation before the United Nations, and, in support thereof, he introduced 31 pages of letters from constituents criticizing the United States policy.

Senator Frank Church introduced several newspaper editorials, most of which suggested withdrawal from Southeast Asia under international supervision.

Representative Daniel J. Flood inserted an article on Laos in the appendix of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. The article questioned the wisdom of another Geneva Conference and discounted the possibility of a political settlement in Laos.

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18 June 1964

Senator Jacob K. Javits inserted in the RECORD a press release from a Republican Citizens Committee's Critical Issues Council calling for a sweeping revision of United States policy in the Far East. The paper made five basic charges: (1) that we had backed away from commitments to anti-Communist forces; (2) pressured anti-Communist leaders to accept coalition governments; (3) failed to condemn armed aggression by neutralists at expense of our allies; (4) failed to relate tactical situations, such as Viet Nam, to the overall struggle; (5) allowed the concept of counter-insurgency to dictate a strictly defensive policy. The Council called for a clearer commitment, coordination of arms and policy, and the development of competent personnel in the Far East.

Senator Morse again attacked "McNamara's war." He suggested that United States aid was producing more weapons for the Viet Cong than any other source. He criticized as being deceitful Secretary Rusk's comment that the Viet Nameese, just as the Malayan government years before, could not do the job alone. Morse pointed out that the Communists in Malay were foreigners, whereas the only foreigners in South Viet Nam were Americans. He said "we are doing very much what Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Communist Russia did in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. We are intervening in someone else's civil war." He reiterated his charge that American boys are being killed illegally, unjustifiably and in shocking betrayal of their own government's obligation to them. He compared the United States to the Soviet Union or Hitler's Germany in concealing fact of its military movements from its own people. At this point he inserted in the RECORD an editorial attacking the use of official lies, mentioning among other items development of the A-11 by the CIA.

The Senator claimed that with concealment of the Laotian air attack, the "credibility gap" was growing apace. He introduced additional articles from the NEW YORK TIMES critical of the war in Southeast Asia.

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On the floor of the House, Representative H. R. Gross pointed out that Peiping radio was the first to inform the American people that United States planes had been bombing in Laos and that CIA hired mercenaries for bombing in the Congo. He submitted that instead of a hot line from the White House to Moscow, one was needed between the Congress and Peiping to inform the Congress and the citizens of what the United States Government was doing.

22 June 1964

Senator Morse attacked President Johnson's statements in San Francisco as a gross overstepping of the President's moral and legal rights. He pointed out that the President alone is not entitled to threaten war or commit the United States to it. The Senator pointed out that the SEATO charter itself would be no substitute, and that in fact the organization is defunct. In addition to renewing his previous charges, the Senator made the following remarks: "President Johnson is making the United States the world's leading threat to world peace; and he will discredit himself and his Administration in the eyes of history if he leaves our people the legacy of unilateral war in Asia." The Senator asserted that such a war could not be justified by any American interest or defense thereof. He asserted that by confronting China we would simply be doing Russia's job. The Senator attacked Admiral Felt's remarks by saying that he never believed that a man in a uniform of our country would be allowed to make such threats and exercise such powers. The Senator made a strong argument against American actions in Asia on moral grounds.

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